2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

881 539 together. We are imploring you, the village people, we were like crows, we have become white like paddybirds; you village people be witnesses.

Now they drink beer, and commencing to sing chaṭiar and doṇ songs they dance. Then all is finished.

Song.

O, the sirom ear had been formed.
Of the woman such and such a girl was born.

O, the marăr bush[12] had blossomed,
The boy so and so was born.

The plump one, the stout one,
The little parakeet, the little starling,
The sucking boy, the sucking so and so,
Bring the two down at once,
The little parakeet, the little starling.

c. Of the burnt-mark.

304 [775] The ancestors of old said that if any one did not get the burnt-mark, in the other world they would put in their arms a caterpillar big as a log; therefore all boys will diligently stand the pain. Some persons take only one burnt-mark, some three, some five, and some take seven burnt-marks. They get the burnt-mark on the left arm. The burnt-marks are made in the following way: They make a roll of a rag like a cigar. They set fire to this at the top end and put it down on the spot where the burnt-mark is to be. It burns slowly down. When it is burnt out the person who makes the mark quickly presses the ashes down on the spot. Then a blister forms and it becomes a sore. When this heals the burnt-mark is there.

d. Of tattooing.

[562] [775] Women do not take burnt-marks; they let themselves be tattooed, in order that in the other world they shall not put a caterpillar big as a log into their arms. They are tattooed on the breast. There are no special figures, only something indefinite, to look beautiful. First they draw with a bit of wood and soot-ink, and afterwards they prick with a needle along the pattern. When tattooing is done, they smear turmeric on, and they go and bathe.

[12] Erythrina indica, Lam.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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stock, to the chief presiding deity, *Marañ Buru*, and ancestor-spirits of the family, uttering suitable incantations so that the baby may prosper in life and have no diseases.

The child, if a male one, now receives his name after his grand-father; and if a female, after her grand-mother on the paternal side. Now follows a general drink of rice-beer and a tribal dinner. The midwife, who generally receives a fee of eight annas if the child is a female one, and ten annas and a *baru* (brass-plate) if a male, will now, on her part, invoke *Marañ Buru* and the dead ancestors of the father of the child at the village bathing-ghat, throw the leaf-cup in water, bathe and return home.[1]

Between the third and the fourth year, children of both sexes have their ears bored by their grand-mothers or elderly female relatives by means of a brass-needle. It is a quiet domestic ceremony and no invitations are issued outside.

Caco-Chatiar

The second critical period in the life of the Santal is sought to be guarded by a purificatory ritual called Caco-chatiar. This ceremony may be observed any time before marriage and is in effect, the admission

1 The midwife's fee for the next male child is 8 ans. and 6 ans. for a female.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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have initiated him into the full rights and responsibilities of adult manhood. The ceremony concludes with the appeal to the *Monren hor*, "We were black like crows, now we are white as white paddy-birds, you five men are our witnesses" (Campbell).

Cicatrization (Sika)

The Santals have some marks looking like vaccination scars on their left-forearms, midway between the wrist and the elbow. These signs seen on the outer side of the forearm, contain an odd number of marks as one, three, five, or nine. It is customary for the male children to wear these *Sika* marks, and the ceremony is generally performed within their twelfth year.

For cicatrization, they use a rag rolled to a thickness of about an inch and a half and shaped like a candle. An odd number of spots on the forearm are then spat upon, and the improvised candle is then made to stand on the saliva, which slowly burns and scalds the skin. The hands of the boy, who rolls in agony, are caught hold of by two men till the process is finished. Thereafter, the wound is healed by the application of a moss called *Sealom* (a fresh water Alga, *Mongeotea immersa*, West).

If you question a Santal as to why they have an odd number of these marks, he will readily answer

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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881 304 [801] that the first sign means *Iìòn* (life) and the next *Màròn* (death), the third *Iìòn* and the fourth *Màròn* and so on. He does not, one can easily guess why, want to close with death. So he hits upon an odd number of *Sika* marks, which will ensure him "life". [975] If this ceremony is not performed, the Santal believes that in his life hereafter, huge worms shaped like their giant drums (*tumdak'*)[1] will sit on his lap and eat him up. No particular religious ceremony, however, attends the *Sika*, which is confined to men only. The women generally wear tattoo marks on their palms, arms and some on their breasts.

Tattoo marks on women (or Khoda)

Santal women, in Mayurbhanj, generally wear several tattoo marks on wrists, near the end of their forearm and on the chest. As regards the nature of these marks, there is nothing special to the Santals to connect these with their traditional history, as has been traced concerning the Kharias. The characteristic common design was found to be that of the sun, amongst a variety of birds and other

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[534] 1 Ref. Tumdak', a kind of drum. The body of the drum is of burnt clay, the end beaten by the left hand is of bullock's hide, and that beaten by the right hand is of goat's skin, the whole is laced with strips of bullock's hide. (page 676, Dr. Campbell's *Santali to English Dictionary*.)

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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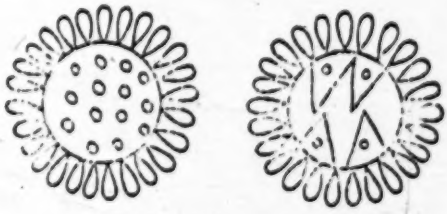
floral embroidery on the skin. This presumably refers to the Santal Supreme Deity, *Siñ Boṅga* (Sun-God). 304 881 [776]

These marks are usually applied to Santal girls between their tenth and eleventh year before their marriage ; cases of post-marriage tattooing also were mentioned by some. Custom requires that the ceremony of tattooing should be performed outside the house by a woman of the *Siklidar* tribe. Such a professional woman is called *Khudni* (she who punctures) in Mayurbhanj. She uses a three-pronged iron weapon to pierce the flesh and imprint the designs, and applies the juice of myrobalan as the dyeing stuff. Finally, the portion thus marked and dyed is washed with turmeric-paste diluted in water. [413] [386]

[531]



Tattoo marks on women.

In answer to our questions as to why they wear such marks, several women said, "These are our marks to be shown before *Bhògban* (God). What else will remain hereafter ?, (excepting these marks)". Nabin Mañjhi, an old Santal Headman explained

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304 881 [606] [775] that tattoo marks are not merely a body-decoration. They are as much necessary to women, as cicatrization (or sika) to Santal men. Should a woman be without her tattoo-signs, her mother-in-law will refuse to accept her as a daughter of the house; and should such a woman die, before she was ceremonially given these marks, *Iòm Raja* (god of death) will take her to be impure and punish her in Hell. That the Santals consider tattooing as a social and religious necessity, and its omission an offence, cannot be contested in view of the wide prevalence of the custom through the length and breadth of the Santal areas.

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Conclusion

In course of the preceding pages, we have noticed the "Rites de passage", the ceremonies and rituals attendant on child-birth, cicatrization of men and tattooing of women. The various formalities with which the new-born babe is ushered into the society have their own meaning. The society, that has an economic background, built up an elaborate clan-life, singularly homogeneous in its totality and component parts. It organised a social constitution for orderly existence and propagation of the species from biological instincts. So, when a new-comer is on the threshold of the tribe, steps are taken to protect him from unknown and supernatural dangers.

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614 one of the original twelve *khūṭ*. They are not allowed to have
614 spots made on them and they will not be vaccinated, but they
784 may be cicatrized; however, their daughters and sisters are not
[304] allowed to be tattooed until after they are married. The un-
[291] married men are not allowed to wear any garment made from
[342] jute. They must not plaster their houses with any other than
[531] white earth; and they may not draw any pictures on the walls
[532] except plantain trees and date palms or figures that look like
782 pictures of temples, drawn with three fingers only. They make
614 their sacrifice at the time of the *Sohrae*; this is performed in the
house, and they sacrifice a pig. One year it must be a male un-
castrated pig and the next year a female, and if for any reason
they cannot get hold of a pig they may sacrifice a black hen.
[825] They should sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit in the shelter of a
[178] white ant hill,[1] but in these days they bring some earth from the
ant hill into the house and sacrifice there."

614 In a Sarenga schoolboy's essay on the origin of his own clan,
773 he began by relating the creation of mankind and finally con-
[15] tinued: "All the Sorens were the soldiers of the Kisku, who were
the owners of the village at Campa Gar. The Marndi lived at
Cirunala, and between the two villages there flowed the Sitanala
river. They began to quarrel with each other because the people
of the two villages had to use the same river for bathing and for
drinking water. Now, since the Soren were the soldiers of the
Kisku, they are like the Gurkhas of Nepal. Just as the Gurkhas
are fierce and do not fear death, so too the Soren." So is virtue
614 inculcated by fostering pride in the clan. One of the sub-clans
[192] of the Soren is the Poita Soren. *Poita* is the word—as pro-
[173] nounced by the Santals—for the sacred thread of the Brahmin.
They relate that in the very early days the ancestors of the
Soren were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and some of the
company began to prepare the food and cook it. In imitation of
Brahmin cooks they put on sacred threads and served all the
people. From that time they became known as Poita Soren.
[782] When they sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit they sacrifice to him
alone, and the offering has to consist of a male uncastrated pig.
The rite is performed at sunrise. They may eat the flesh at any
time during that day and the following night, and if they are
unable to finish it they must bury it before the following sunrise

[171] [1] For references to the sanctity of white ant hills see *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, by W. Crooke, C.I.E., p. 380. The belief is widespread in India. "From early times the earth from an ant hill has been regarded as specially pure, representing 'the savour of the earth', and it was, and is, used in building altars."

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they are touching the blue eggs of the *jihu* bird. The Hāsdāk' do not even touch a goose, and they will not take water from a tank in which geese or ducks are swimming at the time. Binu used to say that he had to perform four different sub-clan sacrifices. To two of the spirits pigs were sacrificed in the cowshed at the time of the *Sohrae*, to another spirit they sacrificed a goat in the house at the end of the *Sohrae*, and to the fourth they sacrificed a ram on the open land outside the village at the time of the Spring festival. The Kaṛwar Hāsdāk' tell the story of how long ago their ancestors were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and all the Hāsdāk' were present. They had performed the sacrifices and everyone had been served with rice and meat, but some of the younger folk present felt that they had not been given enough to eat, so they killed a buffalo and served that as well. The family of the one who slew the buffalo, or *kaḍa*, became known as Kaṛwar Hāsdāk'. They sacrifice a pig, a white hen and a brown hen at the time of the *Sohrae*; the rite is performed inside the house at sunset, and they must finish eating the flesh during the night, burying whatever is left over in the dung heap. The Hatibaṛi[1] Hāsdāk' sacrifice either a white hen or a ram to their sub-clan spirit. This should be done out in the open beside a white ant hill, but, like some others, they now bring a piece of earth from the ant hill into their cowshed. Like the Nij Maṛṇḍi, of whom this is also true, they may not be vaccinated, but their womenfolk may be tattooed.

The Jihu Hāsdāk' are not allowed to brand their cattle. There seems little reason to doubt the fact that most of the clans use distinctive marks in branding their cattle. Bodding has affirmed of the *dhera dag*, or cross, that although it is used as a mark of ownership of cattle "it is not restricted to any sept or sub-sept".[2] (The word "clan" has been adopted in this book in preference to "sept".) In the Bankura district, however, many of the branding marks are definitely associated with the clans, and the marks correspond to those recorded by Charulal Mukherjea in Mayurbhanj.[3] The marks printed on the opposite page have been noticed in Bankura.

The Guṇa or Betel nut Hembrom constitute one of the most numerous of the Hembrom sub-clans. Of them it is said that "a few days after the ancestors had been divided into clans, one of the Hembrom was born at the foot of a betel nut tree. When he

[1] Literally "elephant house", but the name may refer to a locality.
[2] *Santals Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 272.
[3] Charulal Mukherjea, *The Santals*, p. 77.

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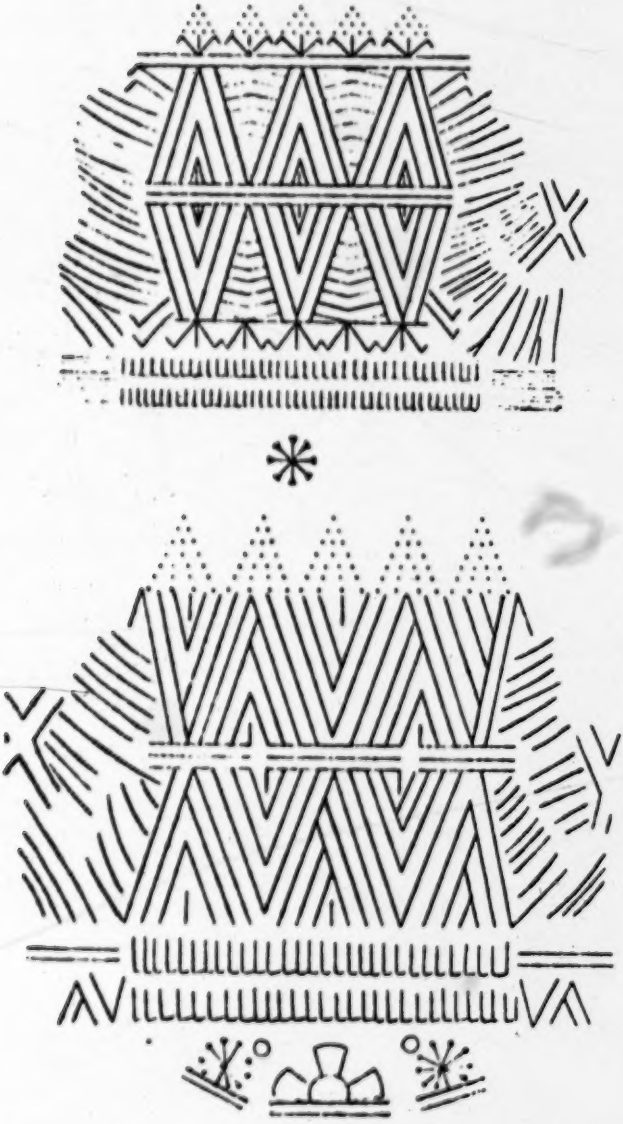

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852 reference to the *caco chatiar*, which suggests that it is at the very least an inconspicuous element in the life of the area.

• 304 The universal custom among Santals of cicatrization of the boys and tattooing among girls may have been connected originally with initiation, though there is no evidence of any such connection in the past and it certainly does not exist at the present time. Boys make a number of self-inflicted burns on their left forearm. The resultant circular scars are usually five in number, but the only rule is that the number of scars must be an odd number, for the odd numbers signify life while even numbers mean death. There may be only one scar and there may be as many as seven. There is no ceremonial to accompany the practice and boys burn themselves as soon as they are old enough to understand the shame of the cowardice implied by the non-possession of the scars. They usually do it when they are out in the fields together herding the village cattle. A fire is lit and a small piece of rag is rolled and set alight. Each boy then presses the burning rag on to the skin of his left forearm as often as he wishes to do so, and the marks remain for life. The operation is known as *sikq*. Santals believe that they will be known by these marks in the after-life and if they do not show them to the guardians of the next world they will be eaten by worms as "large as a foot-pedal rice husker". The same explanation is given for the custom of tattooing the girls.[1] Apart from this motive there is no evidence for a magico-religious basis of the practice. The term for tattooing is *khoda*, and girls must in all [582] cases be tattooed before their marriage. The whole operation may not be completed at once, but may be spread over two or three cold seasons during which the tattooers carry on their work. In this area the work is done by women of one of the blacksmith castes who come from districts to the west. During the cold weather they go from one village to another, and they are, of course, paid for their work. The operation is performed with a long needle, and the dye consists of lampblack which is mixed with human milk—if possible with the milk of the tattooer. There is no relation between the designs and the clan to which the recipient belongs. Marks are tattooed on the temples, also on the side of the nose, on the cheeks and on the chin. Designs to look like necklaces are common, and sometimes there is a decorative belt round the waist. Arms are decorated as with bangles and armlets, and there may be a design on the back of

[1] W. Crooke (*Religion and Folklore in Northern India*, p. 296) alludes to the practice among other tribes and castes.

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the hand. The same is true of both legs and ankles. In fact, the decoration *motif*[1] appears to be uppermost and was well expressed by an old woman who said: "When I die I shall lose all my ornaments; but these at least I shall be able to take with me." 304 •

[1] See illustrations on p. 131 of tattoo marks from the left and right fore arms of a woman.